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RR RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHJA #1626 2400730
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 270730Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9901
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2419
RUEHPF/AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH 0519
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA 3235
RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI 0614
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 8509
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2157
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2957
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2996
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 6317
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS JAKARTA 001626

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/RSP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/EP
DEPT FOR EB/IFD/OMA
DEPT ALSO FOR OES/IET AND OES/ETC/TED
USAID FOR LCHILES
BANGKOK FOR USAID/PARISH
CAMBODIA FOR USAID
MANILA FOR USAID
HANOI FOR USAID
COMMERCE FOR 4430/ KELLY
SINGAPORE FOR BAKER

E.O. 12598: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ID](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: ASEAN SECRETARIAT RAISES CONCERNS ABOUT CHARTER, ROLE

¶1. (SBU) Summary. ASEAN Secretariat Principal Director for External Relations Dhannan Sunoto and his team raised concerns about growing political opposition to the ASEAN Charter in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. The Secretariat officials also expressed regret about ASEAN's limited role in easing border tensions between Thailand and Cambodia. ASEAN member countries agreed in principle to hold an ASEAN Development Coordination Forum to advance the goals of the ASEAN Economic Community. End Summary.

Charter Ratification Concerns Grow

¶2. (SBU) ASEAN Secretariat Principal Director for External Relations Dhannan Sunoto and his team raised concerns to the Embassy about growing political opposition to the ASEAN Charter in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. The ASEAN Charter establishes ASEAN as a legal entity and provides greater accountability for members to comply with ASEAN agreements. The other seven members of ASEAN (Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam) have already ratified the Charter. Secretariat officials noted that the Thai government is in a weak position to advocate for ASEAN Charter ratification in light of the strong criticism from opposition parties over the government's handling of the Thai-Cambodia border dispute. In Indonesia, Secretariat officials worry that political opposition to the Charter will intensify in advance of the 2009 Presidential election. Political efforts to tie Charter ratification to human rights issues in Burma could derail ratification in the Philippines, according to the officials.

¶3. (SBU) ASEAN officials also expressed frustration that ASEAN had not been able to play a more meaningful role in easing border tensions between Thailand and Cambodia. According to the officials, Thailand has consistently downplayed a role for ASEAN in the dispute, preferring to pursue a resolution on a bilateral basis. Thailand opposed the formation of an inter-regional group to address the dispute, according to the officials. In addition, the officials noted that Cambodia prefers to raise the issue outside of ASEAN, fearing ASEAN would try to settle the matter internally without

exposing problems to the broader international community.

ASEAN to Host Development Forum

14. (SBU) ASEAN member countries agreed in principle at their August Standing Committee Meeting to hold an ASEAN Development Coordination Forum, according to the ASEAN Secretariat. The purpose of the Forum is to bring together member country representatives, ASEAN dialogue partners, and other interested organizations to form new partnerships and discuss actions needed to achieve the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015. According to Secretariat officials, the Forum will take place in 2009, following the arrival of the ASEAN Member Country Permanent Representatives at the ASEAN Secretariat. The ASEAN Secretariat plans to host the Forum in Jakarta.

HUME